

HABS
PA
9-LANGH,
2-

NAYLOR HOUSE
Swift & Silver Lake Roads
Langhorne
Bucks County
Pennsylvania

HABS NO. PA-5491

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

NAYLOR HOUSE

HABS NO. PA-5491

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2-

Location: Swift and Silver Lake Roads, Middletown Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Mr. & Mrs. Charles F. Naylor (also present occupants)

Present Use: private residence

Significance: The Naylor House is a good example of a Bucks County house type identified by the two-and-a-half story, side-hall-and-double-parlor plan main block and the three-story wing with truncated gable roof. This truncated or cropped roof is very unusual, although a number of examples can be found in the county. It has been suggested that the function of this roof line was to take advantage of southern exposure to the third story, and/or to avoid higher taxation. The architectural design, as typical of Bucks County, is a restrained vernacular fieldstone based on Georgian and Federal styles.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: According to the current owners, it is believed that the section with the truncated roof was the original house, built ca. 1757. The larger, more formal section to the west side was added during the early nineteenth century. The single-story shed "keeping room" is also a later addition.
2. Original owners: The original owner was probably a miller by the name of Morgan. His mill building once sat on the other side of the property.
3. Original plans: The house originally probably consisted only of the current center section with the truncated roof.
4. Additions and alterations: The large, two-and-one-half-story section was probably added ca. 1800. The single story keeping room was also a later, 19th century addition. The current owners have made some changes the later side-hall-and-double-parlor plan section including the removal of a partition wall which divided the current single parlor into two adjoining parlors, the removal of the plaster from the walls to the front and rear of the room, and the removal of the mantels and plaster from the chimney blocks in this room. Barn siding panelling and a modern kitchen was added in the original section.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Naylor House is of interest architecturally for its unique truncated roof line and its Georgian influenced detailing, particularly in the more formal west section. The truncated or cropped roof gives the house the appearance of being

two stories from the rear. Here, it aligns with the roof of the western section, each with its own entryway. Thus, from the rear there is an separate entry into the more formal section where twin parlors were located for receiving guests, and a separate entry for family use into the kitchen section. From the northern front of the house, however, this truncated roof section appears as a full three stories and is set back from the later western section, being only one room deep as opposed to the western section which was originally two rooms deep. The later section to the west is also more formal in its detailing. It displays the balance and detailing of the Georgian period of architecture. Also of interest is the stuccoed first-story facade, under which a porch was once located, a trait indicative of the county. To the east is a single story keeping room addition which features a beehive oven.

2. Condition of fabric: The house appears to be in good condition and in a near original state with the exception of the removal of a dividing wall, plaster and mantels in the western section.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The house is built in three parts, creating a long, rectangular block. The section to the west is a two-and-a-half-story, three-bay-by-two-bay section in a side-hall-and-double-parlor plan. Adjoining it to the east, the center and oldest section is two-and-a-half stories from the rear and a full three stories from the front. It is three bays across and one room deep. To the east end is a single-story shed roof section, three bays across the east elevation.

2. Foundations: All the foundations are of rough cut or rubble stone.

3. Walls: The walls of all sections are of rubble stone. There is quoining in the westerly and center sections (most pronounced in the westerly section). A subtle water table also appears in all sections.

4. Structural system: The house is of load-bearing masonry construction.

5. Porches, stoops: There current are no porches. The plastering of the exterior, north (front) wall of the center section and the adjoining east wall of the western section indicated that there was once a porch covering this section. The entries of the center and westerly sections, both front and rear, are entered by a set of stone steps.

6. Chimneys: There are a total of three chimneys. There are two interior, brick chimneys at the west gable end of the westerly section, one to either side of the roof ridge. There is a third interior brick chimney at the east gable end of the center section, to the south of the roof ridge.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are two doorways in each of the two main sections, one to the north front and one to the south rear. In both sections the doorways front and rear are across from each other. The most decorative

doorway appears on the north (front) of the more formal westerly section of the house, to its east side. It has an arched doorway with a semi-circular fanlight with a lintel of small, square stones. The doorway is recessed with panelled reveals, four panels per side which correspond with the door. The doorway is flanked by plain pilasters with corner blocks and a plain arched surround. The door has three sets of small panels above the lock rail and one set of larger panels below. There is a doorway to the center of the north (front) facade of the center section. It has a simpler surround consisting of a plain board with a back-band, with a three light transom above. It has a six panel cross-and-open bible door. The doorways of both these sections at the south (rear) elevation are the same (though the one on the west section appears to be a replacement). They consist of a plain band with inner and outer beads with plain corner blocks. Both doorways are recessed with four panel reveals, and have transoms. There are two doorways in the shed addition at the east end. They are both recessed with plain reveals and surrounds (without transoms), with a door with nine lights above and panels below. One is located at the northern end of the east side elevation and the other at the north front (which is the side elevation of this wing).

b. Windows: The typical window in both of the larger sections is a six-over-six-light sash window with a simple architrave surround (plain surround with back-band). Except where they are missing, there are (three) panelled shutters on the first story and louvered shutters in the second story. There are small windows in the third (or half) story of the gable end of the west section (one to either side) and of the east elevation of the center section (one to the north side). In the gable end of the west side of the westerly section is a semi-circular window. The windows in the shed addition are eight-over-eight-light sash.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The roof of the westerly section is side gabled and the roof of the adjoining section is a truncated, side gable. Both are covered with asphalt shingles laid in a diamond pattern. The easterly, single-story section has a shed roof covered with asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves: There is a narrow, boxed return cornice with a slight overhang in the gable ends.

c. Dormers: The house has a total of four dormers. Two are located at the north front elevation, on the westerly section of the house. At the south rear there is a single dormer on each of the two main sections. The dormers have arched roofs with a returning cornice and are flanked with fluted pilasters with bull's eye corner blocks. They have six-over-six-light sash windows. The side walls are covered with asphalt shingles in a diamond pattern.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. First floor: The original, three-story section consists of one room on the first floor, with a large fireplace for cooking on the east wall and a modern kitchen on the west. There are exterior doorways on both the north front and south rear. At the east wall is also a doorway, down a few steps, into the keeping room. This room also has a fireplace with a beehive oven adjacent to it on the east wall. There are exterior doors from the keeping room on the east and north walls. This section connects with the later main block with a doorway to the west wall. This enters into a large stair hall of the side-hall-and-double-parlor plan section, with entries to the front and rear, and the stair towards the south rear. The wall has been taken out between the double parlors to form one larger room, with bookshelves forming a partial partition.

2. Stairways: The stairway to the second floor is located in the westerly section and is a formal, three-run, open-well, open-string stair. It runs along the east wall of the hall, up to a landing, then turns ninety degrees and continues up to a second landing, turns ninety degrees once again and continues to the second floor. It has an elegant balustrade with a slim tapering newel post and balusters (two per step). The stairway from the first to the second floors of the original section has been removed. The third floor of this section is reached from an enclosed stairway.

3. Flooring: There is old, wide board flooring throughout the house with the exception of the keeping room which has a brick floor.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls of all sections are plaster, void of ornamentation. The plaster has been removed, however, in the parlors and along the west wall of the stair hall to expose the stone walls. In the kitchen/dining room (original section) wood paneling has been added. The ceilings are plaster, without ornament, except in the keeping room where there are exposed beams in the ceiling.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The doorways in the original section have a simple architrave surround. The doorways in the later section to the west have symmetrically molded trim with bull's eye corner blocks. There are six panel cross-and-open-bible doors in the original section and eight panel, cherry doors in the later section.

b. Windows: The window moldings match that of the doorways in each section. The windows are all recessed into the stone walls of the house, with splayed reveals.

6. Decorative features and trim: The most decorative feature of the house is the main stairway. The mantels in the westerly section were removed when the plaster was removed to expose the stone. There is a plain mantel in the first floor of the original section, with a wide frieze board and a molded shelf. Above the mantel to the south

side is a small cabinet with a paneled door. The fireplace in the keeping room has a plain frieze board with a bead along the lower edge and a shelf supported by plain triangular brackets. The adjacent beehive oven projects into the room and has a cast iron door with a arched brick header lintel.

D. Site:

a. General setting and orientation: The house sits on a rise in the rolling landscape, facing north onto a downward slope. The roadway is to the west side of the house. The Naylor House can also be entered from two doorways at the south rear. Here, there is a narrow yard marked by a line of pine trees which separates it from a road running perpendicular from the main road to a modern neighborhood south and east of the house. In the level, east yard are located two dependencies.

b. Historic landscape design: Once part of a large farm, the house and associated outbuildings now rest on 2.58 acres.

c. Outbuildings: There are two matching, stone dependencies to the east of the main house. One was used as an privy, located to the northeast; and the other, to the southeast, as a tool shed. Both are of rubble stone construction, in a square shape with a pyramidal roof. The privy has an open clean-out area across the bottom rear, and grooves in the window surrounds indicate louvered slats once covered the windows.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Interview with current owners, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Naylor, and on site investigation by author, Catherine C. Lavoie, June 1989.

Bucks County Conservancy, Inventory of Historic Sites worksheet, prepared by J.D. Russell, 1 April 1978.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Naylor House was undertaken as part of a cooperative project between the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), Robert J. Kapsch, chief and the Bucks County Conservancy, and funded by Congressional appropriation through the efforts of Congressman, Peter H. Kostmayer. Site selection was made by committee through the Bucks County Conservancy, Jeffrey Marshall, director, who also provided access to his research and information on file with the conservancy. The large-format photography was undertaken by HABS photographer, Jack E. Boucher. The historical report was prepared by HABS historian, Catherine C. Lavoie who accompanied the photographer into the field for on site investigation and architectural description.